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WILDLIFE SERVICES—NEW HAMPSHIRE

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in New Hampshire

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on New Hampshire Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts through adaptive management and educational strategies to address increasing wildlife damage management demands.

New Hampshire has more than one million residents and the fastest growing human population in the northeast. New Hampshire has a wide diversity of ecological and sociological environments, within which wildlife has historically been and continues to be an important component. As urban and suburban areas expand, human interactions with wildlife continue to increase as people encroach on agricultural, forested, and wildlife environments.

WS biologists assist New Hampshire fruit, row crop, and livestock producers to reduce losses caused by game animals, birds, rodents and various bird species. WS protects aircraft, air passengers, and pilots from wildlife damage and threats at all major New Hampshire airports. WS also protects and enhances critical habitat for several threatened or endangered species, reduces on and off-site bird conflicts at three solid waste treatment facilities; and protects humans, domestic pets, and livestock from zoonotic diseases including rabies and West Nile virus.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting apiaries, row crops, apples, livestock, and nurseries from bear and deer damage
- Protecting Federal- and State-listed endangered species from predation and habitat loss
- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies and West Nile virus
- Reducing and defining wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing on- and off-site safety hazards and property damage at numerous landfills

WS Research Projects of Interest to New Hampshire

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Controlling wildlife transmission of rabies
- Reducing starling and blackbird damage to feedlots
- Reducing goose damage through avian fertility



Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Crops From Game Damage—In cooperation with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, WS reduces game and other wildlife damage to orchards, apiaries, truck gardens, horticultural commodities and livestock. The National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates that these commodities represent more than 65 percent of all farm marketing cash receipts in New Hampshire. WS mitigates wildlife damage to apple orchards as well as other agricultural products through the distribution of various wildlife damage management materials including: temporary and permanent electric fencing, repellents, and pyrotechnics. The program provided expertise, equipment, and technical assistance to more than 200 producers throughout the State in 2002. As part of its damage management activities, WS serves on the New Hampshire Wildlife Damage Control Advisory Board, which administers a cost-share fencing program to help protect commercial agricultural producers from wildlife damage. To protect beehives, livestock, and public safety from bear conflicts, more than 90 cooperators were provided electrical fences and harassment materials. WS responds to hundreds of requests for assistance involving a variety of bear conflicts each year and also staffs a toll-free Bear Information and Referral Service. In accordance with State statutes, formal wildlife damage assessments are conducted to document and reduce bear damage to specific agricultural crops. WS' damage abatement activities greatly reduced the total funds

reimbursed by the State to producers experiencing bear damage in 2002.

Protecting Threatened or Endangered Species—WS protected three threatened and endangered species during 2002. WS conducted management activities to prevent woodchuck foraging on wild lupine plants which are essential for completion of the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly's life cycle. In addition, WS assisted the New Hampshire Fish and Game and a private nature organization by conducting gull harassment and muskrat management activities to reduce predation and encourage roseate and common tern recolonization on White and Seavey Islands, Isles of Shoals, New Hampshire. All projects resulted in increased species recruitment and effective species protection.

Protecting Air Travel—Wildlife strikes to aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$470 million annually and pose a significant hazard to air passengers. WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center conducts studies to develop better methods for reducing wildlife hazards to aviation and maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor wildlife trends and species of greatest concern to aviation. New Hampshire WS used this research to provide assistance to five airports in the State. On-site evaluations as well as comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments were provided prior to initiating direct assistance activities. WS completed a long-term wildlife hazard assessment at one airport in conjunction with ongoing integrated gull harassment activities at a nearby landfill. Following WS' wildlife damage management activities, gulls, the primary hazard, comprised only 2 percent of all birds observed. Furthermore, zero gull strikes occurred at the airport in 2002. At another airport, WS conducted woodchuck control and wildlife hazard assessment activities to protect civilian and Air National Guard equipment and reduce wildlife hazards to air traffic. WS also provided technical assistance, conducted site visits, and assisted other airports in acquiring Federal and State permits that allow designated airport personnel to immediately address bird and other wildlife hazards at these facilities.

Protecting Human Health and Safety—WS assisted the State Health, Wildlife, and Agriculture Departments with the distribution of oral rabies vaccination baits in the Upper Connecticut River Valley for the first time in 2002. This initiative expands the current vaccination barrier into a high risk corridor through which raccoon rabies could spread north.



To promptly detect the presence and spread of West Nile virus, WS conducted sentinel surveillance projects through live bird sampling and submitted more than 45 percent of all dead birds sampled in New Hampshire in 2002. To resolve site specific wildlife conflicts, WS provided recommendations to more than 1,600 people requesting assistance. Throughout the year, the program also conducted ongoing integrated bird harassment activities at three landfills and completed numerous direct assistance projects that benefitted public health and safety.

Looking to the Future

WS will continue to provide the citizens of New Hampshire with safe, effective service for a broad range of existing and emerging wildlife conflicts that pose threats to the resources and people in New Hampshire. New Hampshire's increasing population of resident Canada geese poses greater challenges for the protection of public health and safety as well as property, including airports, schools, and private residences. Emerging public and animal health issues such as West Nile virus, rabies, Lyme disease, salmonella, and chronic wasting disease will also continue to challenge wildlife managers in New Hampshire. In addition, education will be central to an effective strategy for managing conflicts associated with bears and bird feeding activities.

New Hampshire Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

